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**REMEMBERING LIMITED WAR:  
REFLECTIONS OF THE KOREAN WAR IN  
SELECTED AMERICAN NOVELS**

**BY**

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## ABSTRACT

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The novel is a time-honored and effective way of remembering war insofar as it records the human implications of politics, strategy, and policy as ultimately reflected in the soldier's quotidian existence. In this respect the Korean War is no exception. National and military strategy and policy made Korea a "limited war" rather different in its aims and prosecution from the wars that preceded it, and that conflict remains a distinct American wartime experience. Despite its reputation as the "forgotten war," Korea inspired a significant response in the popular culture, novels included; and many of those novels reflect the ways in which Korea was indeed a rather different war. Imaginative responses to the war comment on the way it was more or less ignored by an apathetic home front, characterized by limitations ranging from the means of waging it to the length of the serviceman's participation, and distinguished from wars before it or since by the participation of recalled reservists only a few years removed from an even greater conflict. Although in terms of quality Korean War fiction is generally undistinguished, it is nonetheless valuable for its reflection of a particular and important moment in the history of American warfare.



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## REMEMBERING LIMITED WAR: REFLECTIONS OF THE KOREAN WAR IN SELECTED AMERICAN NOVELS

Early in the course of World War II, the novelist Ernest Hemingway edited a collection of war stories called Men at War. The various sections of this book, for which its editor wrote a lengthy introduction, are titled with quotations from On War, the classic nineteenth-century treatise on politics, war, and strategy by the Prussian general Carl von Clausewitz. The title of Hemingway's first section is this: "War Is Part of the Intercourse of the Human Race."<sup>1</sup> His book suggests an important corollary: that writing about the experience of war is as basic as the experience itself. Writers respond to war in a variety of forms or genres that reflect personal interest, qualification, and purpose; there are historians, biographers, memoirists, poets, and—not least—novelists.

The novel is a time-honored and most effective way of reflecting the experience of war. From Stendhal to Tim O'Brien, novelists have employed the form of extended prose fiction to investigate the nature of warfare in general and wars in particular. In doing so, they have often succeeded in recording the human implications of politics, strategy, and policy as ultimately reflected in the day-to-day experience of the soldier, sailor, Marine, or airman. Writing on the military novel, Josiah Bunting once observed that "the best war novelists frequently come closer to the reality of war in their work than military historians."<sup>2</sup> Norman Mailer, like Bunting both a former soldier and a novelist, has expressed the connection of the novel to the truth of experience by characterizing novelists as "those infantrymen of the arts."<sup>3</sup> In Mailer's view, just as the foot soldier is closest to the experience of combat, the novel is closest to the essence of human experience as reflected by the creative imagination.

It is especially the case that Americans who wish to reflect the experience of war turn to the novel as the form or genre of preference, and the American reader's acquaintance with his or her country's wars is much more likely to come in the form of a novel rather than a memoir or poetry. Writer and scholar Paul Fussell (another former infantryman) has observed this tendency as follows: "When an American has something personal and pressing to write about . . . his first thought is to write a novel about it, choosing not to notice that the talent for contriving significant credible human actions is extremely rare."<sup>4</sup> Fussell's remark implies that the good novel, in a literary sense, might thus be the exception rather than the rule; and that as a proposition would be most difficult to dispute. That is not to say, however, that any novel—particularly the war novel—lacks significance in what it has to say about its subject. One can learn much about America's wars from the novels written about them; and the Korean War, the so-called "forgotten war," is no exception.

The purpose of this study is to consider the way in which selected novels of the Korean War reflect that conflict as a particularly different kind of American war—different especially from the war that preceded it. In a way that distinguished it dramatically from the two World Wars of the century, American participation in the conflict was sudden and immediate; and American national and military strategy and attendant policy made Korea a "limited war" quite different in its aims and prosecution from what was once called "the Great War" and from what writer and radio pioneer Studs Terkel has famously called "the

Good War.”<sup>5</sup> Such differences affected the personal experience of those who fought in Korea, and this essay considers how some of the war’s novelists have reflected those differences and that experience in the fiction they wrote.

Following a brief consideration of Korea as a different kind of wartime experience and then an overview of the Korean War corpus, a body of work not sufficiently known or appreciated within the American culture, the study will examine how selected novels reflect and, in effect, memorialize the limited-war nature of Korea that indeed made it something quite different—and perhaps thus more difficult to remember. A concluding section then attempts to locate the body of Korean War novels within the war’s larger place in the American popular culture and memory.

## A DIFFERENT KIND OF WAR

In an essay called “The Strategy of Limited War,” Arthur E. Brown, Jr. observes that war limitations “have been categorized as limitations of purpose (objectives); limitation of levels of violence (weapons); limitations of duration (time); and limitation of locale (geography).”<sup>6</sup> By now the ways in which those categories apply to the Korean War are well understood. Although the stated objectives of the United Nations and its military forces (provided mostly by the United States) fluctuated from restoration of the prewar 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel boundary to unification of Korea under a UN mandate and then back again to reestablishment of the status quo antebellum, war aims never included either engagement of North Korea’s purported sponsor, the Soviet Union, or defeat of the principal Communist belligerent, the People’s Republic of China, as a nation-state. To this extent the Korean War was, in the words of historian Russell F. Weigley, “a limited war fought for negative aims.”<sup>7</sup> Chief among those “negative aims” was the avoidance of a World War III, something that President Harry Truman said in so many words.<sup>8</sup>

To that end, the UN effort—begun but five years after the horrific debut of atomic weapons—limited the level of violence to conventional means. Similarly, limitations of locale were significant throughout the conflict; UN forces strictly limited their operations to Korea proper, to a scrupulous degree regarding the international boundary between North Korea and Manchuria—the Yalu River, to be precise—during the period when MacArthur’s forces approached that limit in the last months of 1950. Later, when prosecution of the war had become a strategic and even tactical defensive, that orientation constituted in itself a kind of geographical limitation. Only the limitation of duration, of time, does not quite fit where Korea is concerned; and there is some irony there insofar as limitations of objectives, violence, and geography—in conjunction with a variety of political factors—conspired to lengthen the conflict into the protracted stalemate that it became. Two noted historians have put it this way: “In 1951 United Nations Command won but could not end the Korean War.”<sup>9</sup>

What this unexpected, then protracted, limited war meant for those who fought it involved a variety of differences from its predecessor conflict. Among these differences was the existence of a generally apathetic home front—in comparison to that of the “Good War,” at least. And, in marked contrast to the

intensity and totality of that earlier war's nature, its sweep and scope over time and space, Korea was marked by restrictions and limitations that eventuated into a situation remarkably akin to that of the First World War—such that those who fought in Korea during the conflict's latter half found themselves engaged in a kind of “sitzkrieg” quite unrelated to the experience of World War II. Moreover, those combatants found themselves in Korea for only a limited amount of time as part of a rotation policy that gained much more notoriety in a later war on the Asian mainland. Earlier, however, there was another difference: the requirement, in the hurried response to the emergency of the North Korean attack that began the war, for reservist veterans of the Second World War to return to combat only a few years after their fighting days had presumably ended. They did so, but not always willingly.

All that said, the Korean War was in some ways largely derivative of World War II—in ways that perhaps ultimately serve to underscore the more important differences. Historian Stephen E. Ambrose has noted that Korea was fought mainly by “a veteran army—most officers and many of the enlisted men had fought in World War II—and a good one.” Moreover, Ambrose observes, it “used World War II organization charts, World War II weapons, and World War II techniques.”<sup>10</sup> That the Korean War looked a lot like the Second World War perhaps accounts for the frustration engendered on a variety of fronts by what was in fact a very different experience. And apparent similarities manifested themselves in many of the means by which the war was reflected. Newsreels of the period are hardly distinguishable in tone and rhetoric from those of the Second World War; and, as Jeanine Basinger has remarked in her study of the World War II combat film as a distinguishable genre, the Hollywood response to Korea was “only a variation of the World War II combat film.”<sup>11</sup>

It is possible, though, to find reflections of Korea as a different kind of war in various dimensions of the American cultural memory. Basinger's valid generalization notwithstanding, there are a few films of some note that illuminate the nature of the Korean War.<sup>12</sup> Over time, some veterans of the war have reflected their Korean experience in personal narratives, ranging from what Robert A. Lovett once called “posterity papers” by senior officials to the more prosaic—though sometimes vulgarly colorful and informative—recollections of more ordinary Americans, occasionally in the form of oral histories.<sup>13</sup> It is in the form of the novel, however, that there exists some of the more interesting and valuable commentary on the conflict in Korea, the limited war, as an importantly different kind of war. In reading its novels, however obscure most of them may be, one can begin to appreciate the variegated reality of the Korean War.

### **THE KOREAN CORPUS: AN OVERVIEW**

It is indeed the novel that constitutes the principal imaginative effort dealing with the Korean conflict, beginning with MacKinlay Kantor's Don't Touch Me in 1951 and extending to some works quite recently published. In between there have appeared a variety of texts that range from relatively well-written books like Melvin Voorhees's Show Me a Hero (1954) and George Sidney's For the Love of Dying (1969) to works of lesser quality if equivalent sincerity such as Connor Hammond Cole's The Cross and

the Star (1960), a memorial to the role of chaplains in the war, and L. K. Bergee's Rendezvous with Hell (1963), a prime example of the thinly disguised memoir.

If these works seem obscure (and they are), they are in that sense representative of Korean War fiction as a whole. It is reasonable to assert that even the most knowledgeable student of twentieth-century American literature would respond with a few titles at most when asked to name some novels that have to do with the Korean War. These titles would probably include James A. Michener's The Bridges at Toko-ri (1953), William Styron's The Long March (1952), and perhaps Richard Condon's The Manchurian Candidate (1959). Were that the case, one could then observe that of those three, only Michener's novel is characterized by fictional action that occurs during the Korean War and involves the depiction of combat. Regarding Korea, there is no single text or small group of novels analogous in terms of recognition to, say, Norman Mailer's The Naked and the Dead or Joseph Heller's Catch-22 from the Second World War. With one notable exception, even those few scholars writing about American war novels seem to be familiar with only a handful on Korea. Yet many were written.

To describe the novels of the Korean War in terms of their provenance and general content is to make three points. First, most of the fiction was written during the decade in which the war began and in that which followed; several novels were published during the war itself. On the other hand, the period of least apparent interest was the 1970s, the decade that saw the painful climax, denouement, and immediate aftermath of the American involvement in its second "limited" Asian war. The past two decades have seen some resurgence of interest, many of the recent novels seemingly concerned with the memorializing function of fiction, a trend indicated by such extra-textual means as dedications and epigraphs. This small trend may have some connection to the larger increase in national awareness—or, at least, veteran activism—that surrounded the long-awaited development of the national memorial project in Washington and the impending fiftieth anniversary of the war itself.

Next, the great majority of texts are concerned with ground forces, Army and Marine actions, as opposed to those fighting the sea or air war; moreover, the principal settings of these stories are either frontline, combat situations or—to a lesser degree—prisoner-of-war contexts. While there are more novels about the Army than the Marines, the latter's share of the fictional corpus is still disproportionately large, and the Marine image conspicuously more visible, when considered against the size of their force in Korea.<sup>14</sup>

Finally, most of the novels address either the entire period of the war or, more common, some period within its latter two years. Relatively few are primarily concerned with events that occurred in 1950, during the manic half-year that contained most of the war's maneuvering. Accordingly, that early period is significantly underrepresented in terms of fictional treatment.

In the conclusion to his study Restrained Response: American Novels of the Cold War and Korea, 1945-1962, Arne Axelsson discusses his perception of a "particular stress on historical accuracy and general authenticity in war and military novels. . ."<sup>15</sup> Relating this emphasis to the authors of such novels, Axelsson establishes three categories of Korean War novelists: the "military professionals";

others—such as reservists and draftees—with military experience; and professional writers of one kind or another. He goes on to argue that each of these categories of novelists has found it especially important to seek realism or verisimilitude in their work.<sup>16</sup>

A fair number of Korean War novels were indeed written by authors who served in that conflict; and, of course, they wrote novels that have a great deal to do with their own experience. Walter Lasly, a career Air Force officer who wrote his book while still on active duty, created a fictional counterpart to his own experience in a B-26 bomber wing at Pusan in Turn the Tigers Loose (1956). Similarly, James Salter, a West Point graduate who—like Lasly—served in both the Army Air Corps and its separate-service successor, depicts in The Hunters (1956) the same kind of fighter unit and pilots that he no doubt encountered at his base in Kimpo during the war.<sup>17</sup>

Many of the ground-combat novels were also written by Korean War veterans. Curt Anders, whose The Price of Courage (1957) reflects infantry life during the stalemated latter phase of the war, was an Army captain and company commander in Korea. He later assisted General Matthew Ridgway in the preparation of the latter's The Korean War, a history of the conflict told from the perspective of the war's second Eighth Army commander and MacArthur's successor as the multi-faceted senior commander in the Far East. Other Army veterans include Thomas Anderson, whose Your Own Beloved Sons (1956) reflects his experience with a reconnaissance company during the war's first year, and Glen Ross, author of The Last Campaign (1962), whose enlistment in the Army in 1948 made him one of the intra-war soldiers for whom combat in Korea with the 7th Cavalry of the First Cavalry Division was at best a rude awakening from the slumber of occupation duty in Japan.

Naturally, Marine Corps veterans of Korea have been heard from as well. Furthermore, they tend to be more self-consciously memorializing in their approach to the fiction. Perhaps the best example is William Crawford, who notes his own service in a prefatory note to Give Me Tomorrow (1962), a novel that takes its title and epigraph from David Douglas Duncan's famous anecdote concerning an anonymous Marine involved in the retreat from the Chosin Reservoir. This anecdote has a direct connection with Duncan's photograph of that same Marine, probably one of the several most recognizable visual images of the Korean War.<sup>18</sup> The legendary Chosin operation is memorialized as well in Pat Frank's Hold Back the Night (1951)—one of the best Korean War novels—and Ernest Frankel's Band of Brothers (1958). The latter, like Crawford's text, connects its title with an epigraph, and both with the thematic import of the novel. Citation of the well-known lines from Shakespeare's Henry V suggests the sense of special fraternity felt by the veterans of that phase of the Korean War. Indeed, the formal organization of survivors of that campaign is called "The Chosin Few"; and the group's motto is a paraphrase of the Shakespearean reference: "We few, we Chosin Few, we eternal band of brothers."<sup>19</sup>

William Styron qualifies as both a Marine veteran of the Korean War period (though not the war itself) and as one of the "professional writers."<sup>20</sup> James Michener is otherwise the most recognizable name within the latter category. His contribution to the Korean War bibliography is not limited to The Bridges at Toko-ri; he also wrote Sayonara (1953), which—though set almost entirely in Japan—is a

novel of the Korean War period and features airmen, especially F-86 Sabre pilot Major Lloyd "Ace" Gruver, who have fought in the ongoing war. Followers of popular fiction in the 1950s would recognize also the name of Frank G. Slaughter, a most prolific novelist known for his emphasis on the medical profession. Thus Sword and Scalpel (1957), a novel that manages to combine the medical interest with the prisoner-of-war/collaboration motif as well as the reservist-regular contrast, two common thematic interests of Korean War fiction. His book also includes a stress on religious matters, rare in the war's literature but not unusual for Slaughter.

Given the prevailing generalizations concerning the quantity and quality of creative works that take the Korean War as their principal or partial subject, one should not be surprised to learn that the body of secondary material is correspondingly small. There are only a handful of book-length critical sources that address the Korean War material; and even these consider it only as part of a larger critical enterprise. Much remains to be done by way of fully and properly considering the extent and worth of the American imaginative response to the Korean War.

### IMAGINING THE LIMITED WAR

One of the significant thematic threads running through the fabric of the Korean War literature is the idea that this war, especially when compared to the one that preceded it, is indeed quite a different war. It is a war more or less ignored by an apathetic home front, characterized by limitations that range from the means of waging it to the length of the serviceman's participation, and distinguished from wars before it or since by the participation of recalled reservists only a few years removed from an even greater conflict. An early expression of this notion, of Korea as a different kind of war, emerges from a novel that describes the war near the end of its first year, Walt Sheldon's Troubling of a Star, the manuscript of which was completed before the end of 1951.<sup>21</sup> In the book, fighter pilot Dick Tindle reflects upon the difference between this war and the last one:

It didn't seem like war over here. Akuni might very well have been almost any air base sleeping under the sun in peacetime. Not at all like it had been last time, even in the United States. Maybe that was because people still couldn't quite bring themselves to admit that this was a real war. They didn't go around this time waving the war bonds they had bought, reminding you that loose lips sank ships and telling you how they'd chiseled a tankful of gasoline without ration points the other day.<sup>22</sup>

Other narrators make essentially the same point by way of describing the contemporaneous home front. There is, for example, the well-known passage from Michener's The Bridges at Toko-ri that contrasts the plight of downed pilot Harry Brubaker with the scene half a world away:

In his home town at that moment the University of Colorado was playing Denver in their traditional basketball game. The stands were crowded with more than 8,000 people and not one of them gave a damn about Korea. In San Francisco a group of men were finishing dinner and because the Korean war was a vulnerable topic, they laid plans to lambaste it from one end of the country to the other, but none of them really cared about the war or sought to comprehend it. And in New York thousands of Americans were crowding into the night clubs where the food was good and the wine expensive, but

hardly anywhere in the city except in a few homes whose men were overseas was there even an echo of Korea.<sup>23</sup>

In his novel The Officers' Wives (1981), Thomas Fleming paints a similar picture through the reflections of Joanna Burke, whose husband is recovering from serious wounds inflicted by the Chinese. "America," she thinks, "had become unreal in the last five months. America went about its business, oblivious to the war in Korea." There follows a catalogue of those things that apparently have been of interest to the country in late 1950, including the televised fight between Joe Louis and Ezzard Charles, "Faye Emerson's cleavage" and "Milton Berle's latest antics," and the boom of both car sales and Las Vegas.<sup>24</sup>

Numerous other, more succinct, expressions reflect the view of those on the ground in Korea. In Melvin Voorhees's Show Me a Hero, the fictional commander who precedes Lieutenant General Lark Logan in charge of Eighth Army says this of his soldiers: "These boys come here feeling they're doing something unpopular with a large part of our own people and our own government and the world."<sup>25</sup> In Band of Brothers, Ernest Frankel's Captain Patrick ponders his situation in the midst of the Chosin withdrawal: "If anything, he felt a bitterness toward his fellow citizens at home, so comfortable, so unaware, so uncaring, so safe."<sup>26</sup> And Curt Anders's Lieutenant Holloway in The Price of Courage salutes the men who "do the killing and the bleeding and the dying for their unknowing and indifferent countrymen. . . ."<sup>27</sup>

One of the few novels oriented toward the "young reader," Stephen Meader's Sabre Pilot (1956), includes an expression of pilot discontent with restrictions that prohibit American warplanes from attacking targets in Manchuria. Their frustration is voiced in one airman's "wistful phrase": "Golly—how I wish we could!" The narrator's gloss: "It was the ground rules that made this a tough war."<sup>28</sup> Their discontent, expressed in terms and tone appropriate to the book's intended audience, reflects another dimension of Korea as a different kind of war: as a limited conflict in which constraints on the waging of war go well beyond expected bounds such as the laws of warfare represented by the Geneva Conventions. The text of James Salter's book The Hunters suggests, though, largely by what it does not say, that the geographical limitation embodied by the Yalu River became simply a fact of life for the fighter pilots of Korea. Still, the novel's narrator does describe the river as "an unreal boundary winding far below," noting that protagonist-pilot Cleve Saville "could see a hundred miles into a China that ended only with a vast horizon, beyond the lives of ten million rooted people."<sup>29</sup>

But even if combat pilots would come to take such restrictions in aerial stride, they were doubtless a source of significant frustration for senior commanders who remembered all too well the recent experience of World War II. For example, Voorhees's Lieutenant General Logan vents his dissatisfaction with what he calls a "profitless experience" in a conversation with his aide-de-camp that invokes the names and frustrated tactical aspirations of two of his predecessors in command of Eighth Army; Logan rues the government's refusal to grant the late Walton Walker's request to have the Yalu bridges bombed

and, later, to take “the wraps off Van Fleet, just about the best fightin’ field commander we’ve had since Indian days.”<sup>30</sup>

The result of those kinds of constraints was a stalemate that, over time, eventuated into a situation reminiscent of the First World War. In his novel Chrysanthemum in the Snow: The Novel of the Korean War (1990), James Hickey notes the similarity between “1951 Korea” and “1916 France,” likening the give-and-take exchange of limited ground attacks to the children’s game “King of the Hill.”<sup>31</sup> In a similar way the title figure of John Scanlan’s Davis (1969) makes the connection between the two wars both explicit and literary through his response to a visiting writer’s (and narrator’s) question upon entering the officer’s command bunker:

“My God!” I said. “What happens when a shell lands nearby?”  
“Third act curtain, Journey’s End,” Davis said. “Absolutely.”<sup>32</sup>

The deadly ebb and flow of patrols and limited attacks into the mid-century version of No Man’s Land is finally assessed rather bitterly, though accurately, by the protagonist of Edward Franklin’s It’s Cold in Pongo-ni (1965). The lieutenant named only “Richard,” but also called “the Peace Officer,” renders this terse judgment: “We win, they lose. They win, we lose. And it all comes out as one big, bloody zero.”<sup>33</sup>

An innovation of the Korean War within the U.S. military was another kind of limitation: the “rotation” policy in which a serviceman’s tour of duty in the war was limited to as little as a year. Although limited tour lengths based on missions flown had been applied to pilots in World War II (for the best-known literary application, see Catch-22), the idea of such a term of combat service for the GI or Marine was a new concept. The Korean War soldier who had served in the Second World War, or his brother or father, had necessarily resigned himself to “the duration”—whatever that might turn out to mean. So the rotation policy presented a much different situation, one not ignored in the fiction.

Indeed, the existence and implications of the rotation concept are central to George Sidney’s novel For the Love of Dying, a story that takes for its subject the several surviving members of a Marine Corps rifle company that landed at Inchon in the amphibious operation of September 1950. The novel’s setting is approximately one year later as rotation time approaches for those who remain. Of the eight Inchon veterans at the start of the fictional action, only one avoids becoming a casualty by the novel’s end; of the other seven, four are wounded in action and three killed. The fate of these men suggests the additional layer of mortality or at least vulnerability that seems to develop when such an artificial limit is applied to the perilous business of combat. The kind of behavior that can result, and even become ritualistic, on the part of what a later war would call “short-timers” is depicted in Thomas Anderson’s Your Own Beloved Sons. Its narrator explains the platoon sergeant’s lack of interest in an incipient patrol:

He was going home; rotatees did not, were not, expected to volunteer for anything. They led a twilight life, suspended between two states of existence. They wore uniforms, they ate meals, they even carried weapons, but not for any aggressive purpose. They stayed out of trouble.<sup>34</sup>

Since the perspective in Korean War fiction is typically that of the frontline soldier or Marine, the rotation policy is, for those involved in either of the latter two years of the conflict, an expectation and matter of fact. From an institutional point of view, though, it is rather a nuisance and arguably an impediment to efficiency. This minority view appears in The Last Campaign, as Glen Ross's lead character named Hunter questions the newly implemented policy: "A rotation program! Were they going to take turns at the war? That was ridiculous. A war was a war, and this one wasn't going too well as it was."<sup>35</sup> His initial negative reaction is followed by practical concerns about potential behavior such as that characterized by Anderson and cited above: "They're going to start sending men back to the States. How about the ones on the bottom of the list? Why, they won't be sticking their heads out of the hole! It's just not human nature to want to fight that way."<sup>36</sup> Of course, for better or worse, a similar policy was a mainstay of the American military involvement in Vietnam, providing another generation of novelists with an almost formulaic approach to writing about that different kind of war.<sup>37</sup>

The sudden onset of war in Korea, the prompt decision to commit U.S. ground forces to the defense of the peninsula, and the failure of those insufficiently trained and ill-equipped troops to stem the North Korean tide presented the American government with a major challenge: how to increase the quantity and quality of its forces and make them available to influence the Korean situation as rapidly as possible. Eventually the United States would see a partial-mobilization effort that featured conscription and a return to war production, an effort that would propel the country and its armed forces into the thick of the Cold War era. But at first, in the heat of the momentary need to build proficiency at least to buy time, the Truman Administration turned to many of those who had served before—and who probably thought their days of service were over. These were the reservists called back to active duty for the Korean War, citizens whose contributions to the war, reactions to it, and conflict with the regulars with and for whom they served appear prominently in the literature.

In The Captains (1983), W. E. B. Griffin characteristically takes pains to describe the structure of the Army's officer corps, from the regulars through the National Guard to the reservists, those in organized units and those as well in the "inactive reserve." He explains the President's decision to call mainly upon the latter category, even though they had been receiving no pay for their status and "had been specifically assured that if they kept their commissions in the inactive reserve, they would be called to duty only in the event of an all-out war, and only after the National Guard and active reserve had been called to duty." Drawing upon "his own experience as a captain of artillery," the Commander in Chief made his decision because he "could not justify not calling up the best qualified officers simply because they had already done their duty." Assessing the situation from Truman's perspective, Griffin concludes: "It was a goddamned dirty trick on them, but that's the way it was going to have to be."<sup>38</sup>

The frustration of those thus "tricked" is depicted frequently in Korean War fiction, but especially in two short novels that are also two of the better and better-known products of and about the period. These are James Michener's The Bridges at Toko-ri and William Styron's The Long March. In Michener's text the predicament and attitude of his protagonist, Lieutenant Harry Brubaker, fit hand-in-glove with the

home-front apathy described earlier. The discontent of the recalled reservist is only exacerbated by the apparent lack of national commitment to the war, though Brubaker rises above his ire to accomplish his assigned tasks. Styron presents another case of the disgruntled World War II veteran who is back in uniform and not at all happy about it. In his novel the reluctant reservist is opposed in more than one sense to the regular officer, the professional who embodies the military establishment.

Michener's Brubaker is a Denver lawyer whom the Korean War has snatched from a successful practice and a happy marriage and family life back into naval flight status aboard the aircraft carrier U.S.S. Savo. His appearance and speech define him as a military non-professional, and a bitter one at that; but there is a sense of duty that, more than anything else, defines him. He explains: "The catapult fires. There's that terrific moment and you're out front. On your way to Korea. So you say, 'What the heck? I'm here. Might as well do the job.'"<sup>39</sup> These remarks suggest that the demands of duty are more easily swallowed when spiced with the excitement provided by the catapult and tailhook that define the limits of the naval aviator's adventure. Certainly it is Brubaker's view that this all would be easier yet if it were not the case that at home "nobody even knew there was a war except my wife."<sup>40</sup>

The recipient of these comments from reservist pilot Brubaker is Admiral George Tarrant, characterized as a consummately professional naval aviation commander. Two qualities define him as a professional: sheer ability and love of his work. Indeed, for the admiral the sight of his crew landing the aircraft onto the carrier deck is a prospect more beautiful than "his wife at the altar, Japanese battleships going down, ducks rising from Virginia marshes and his sons in uniform."<sup>41</sup> Those things of lesser beauty, described without irony by the novelist, establish the admiral's perspective. And since those "sons in uniform" both perished in the Pacific during the last war, Tarrant habitually selects one of his pilots to fill a role as surrogate son. On this deployment that role is played by Brubaker, the good citizen thus connected to the good sailor.

This connection exists not only because Harry Brubaker performs well in spite of his bitterness, but also because Tarrant himself believes that they both are engaged in "the wrong war in the wrong place."<sup>42</sup> At the same time, his own sense of duty justifies the importance of those whom he describes to Brubaker's wife in Japan as "the voluntary men."<sup>43</sup> That her husband persists in his duty even in the face of considerable fear and that he dies fighting give him heroic status; in conjunction with the admiral's subsequent encomium—"Where did we get such men?"—these sacrifices serve to memorialize the reservist who answers the call.<sup>44</sup> In Michener's novel, Admiral Tarrant the professional and Lieutenant Brubaker the "voluntary man" are brothers under the skin.

Styron's The Long March records the plight of the reservist in a rather different way. The setting for this story is a Marine Corps stateside training base during the Korean War. The influence of the war is palpable, for the primary conflict in the novel is that between the regular Marines—the career or professional Marines known in a more recent war as "lifers"—and the reservists called up precisely because of the Korean situation. The fictional struggle is personified in the battle of wills between Lieutenant Colonel Templeton, the training battalion commander and quintessential career Marine, and

Captain Mannix, reservist and World War II veteran, Brooklyn radio-store owner, and one of Templeton's company commanders.

Styron tells his story through the consciousness of Lieutenant Culver, a battalion staff officer recalled to duty from his New York law practice, who occupies a position on the regular-reserve axis somewhere between the two commanders, but relatively closer to Mannix. The latter is quite outspoken in his unhappiness:

This whole mess is degrading. I know it's my own fault I stayed in the reserves, Jack, you don't have to tell me that. I was a nut. I didn't know I was going to get called out for every frigging international incident that came along. But, goddam, it's . . . degrading for a man my age to go sniffing around on my belly in the boondocks like a dog.<sup>45</sup>

Templeton, nicknamed "Old Rocky," could hardly be more different. Lean and mean, looking and acting the part that he plays (and Culver sees him as an actor whose act has become his life), the colonel complements his appearance and his sobriquet with a swagger stick, a pearl-handled .38 revolver, and a "quizzical, almost tenderly contemplative air of authority. . . ."<sup>46</sup> For him there is, or should be, no difference between those like him and those like his reservist junior officers, since the "R" affixed at the end of the 'USMC' is merely a "technical difference."<sup>47</sup> Thus his rationale for the "long march": a forced march of thirty-six miles from the training site to the main camp. And thus the battle of wills between him and the truculent Captain Mannix.

It is the dynamics of the march in progress, as the conflict between regular and reservist unfolds, that forms the central interest and the effectiveness of this story. For his part, Mannix responds to the challenge presented and represented by the irresistible force of authority with what Styron calls "rebellion in reverse."<sup>48</sup> Obsessed with completion of the march, he becomes a tyrant in his own right, goading and berating his own troops along the route of march. While for the embittered reservist the march is "the vulgar battle, the competition," for the regular in command it is "only a task to be performed. . . ."<sup>49</sup> Mannix is embattled and outraged; Templeton is calm and controlled. Only when the captain has gone too far, crossing the line into total verbal disrespect, does the colonel succumb to anger. His accompanying threat is instructive: "I'm going to have you tried for gross insubordination. I'll have you sent to Korea."<sup>50</sup>

If there is triumph in the captain's endurance, since he does finish the march, it is only a Pyrrhic victory. Like Culver and presumably many other frustrated and disgruntled recalled reservists, Mannix is "lost in the night, astray at mid-century in the never-endingness of war. . . ."<sup>51</sup> Styron's novel records the plight of such men, forced by the war in Korea into conflict with regulars like Colonel Templeton, for whom war and preparation for war are merely business as usual.

## REMEMBERING LIMITED WAR

World War II Marine aviator and subsequent scholar Samuel Hynes wrote a book, published in 1990, called A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture. In it he describes "the Myth of the War"—by which he means "not a falsification of reality, but an imaginative version of it, the story of the

war that has evolved, and has come to be accepted as true.”<sup>52</sup> Later in his text he describes the grandly rhetorical inscription on the tomb of the Unknown Warrior in Westminster Abbey as “the ultimate formulation of the official meaning of the war.”<sup>53</sup>

For most of the time since its inconclusive conclusion represented by the 1953 armistice, the Korean War had no informing myth in the sense that Hynes employs the term—at least not in the way that the World Wars and even Vietnam have such remembered identities. The limited war soon became axiomatically the “forgotten” war: an anti-myth at best. One might argue persuasively that it was the forgotten war precisely because it was a limited war: one without a declaration and without a total victory accompanied by a vanquished enemy’s unconditional surrender.

For some, however, that was not acceptable. The development of the Korean War Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC, a monument formally dedicated on July 27, 1995, reflected tangibly what amounted to a campaign to establish for the “forgotten war” its own particular myth—in the sense that Hynes employs the term—and to inscribe upon the American consciousness a related “official meaning.” Playing upon the received image of Korea as the “forgotten war,” publicity for the memorial project has actually celebrated the legacy of the conflict as America’s “forgotten victory.”

Perhaps the best approximation of an official meaning lies in remarks delivered by President George Bush at the memorial’s 1992 groundbreaking ceremony. He first characterized, romantically, the motivation of those who fought: “America’s uniformed sons and daughters went to Korea not for themselves. Hating war, they sought only liberty. They fought so that the enslaved might be free.” Then, on behalf of “a grateful nation,” he assessed the effect of the war: “For stopping totalitarianism, the entire free world still salutes you.”<sup>54</sup> Later in his speech he even more explicitly defined the war as a “victory” indeed:

And did we succeed? Did we ever. We built a stable peace that has lasted nearly 40 years, and together we held the line. And in the wake of North Korea’s wanton aggression in June of 1950, America did not hesitate. The Eighth United States Army dispatched Task Force Smith as the lead element of what eventually—(applause). And I saluted some of the veterans of that Task Force, a Task Force which eventually became a mighty United Nations effort to hold the line.<sup>55</sup>

The word “eventually” is a rhetorical vestige of the fact that Task Force Smith, the undermanned and ill-equipped battalion-minus organization that had the first combat encounter with the North Korean People’s Army, served as little more than a tactical speed-bump on the enemy’s drive southward. In addition, one need not be an historian to realize that the “mighty United Nations effort” was more of a mighty United States effort—one that in fact established something of a precedent for Bush’s own finest hour, in the Persian Gulf, a connection that he underscored in this same address.

The President’s generalization about the mindset of those who served is questionable to say the least. The record suggests that it would be much more accurate to observe that those who went did so largely because they were told to, especially the recalled reservists and the draftees; here the evidence of the fiction is pertinent. It is also instructive to note that in the comments cited above, the President twice

employed forms of the phrase “hold the line.” He did so a third time in referring to a particular moment in the war: “And who can forget the epic battle of the First Marine Division at Chosin Reservoir. . . . They held the line against overwhelming odds.”<sup>56</sup> In fact, what the Marines specifically did not do was to “hold the line.” However characterized by whatever source, their operation was in fact a retreat—an expertly and courageously executed maneuver in the face of overwhelming odds and the additional enemy that Napoleon named “General Winter,” but a retreat nonetheless. Regardless of the hyperbole that not unexpectedly informs President Bush’s remarks, his use of that phrase—“hold the line”—does suggest that the “victory” in Korea was rather different from earlier American wartime triumphs.

As represented by Bush’s remarks and the view of those who built the memorial, the myth of the Korean War, official or not, is this: that the United Nations rallied to the cause of freedom within the international community by dispatching forces to the violated Republic of Korea, the democratic nation led by Syngman Rhee and attacked suddenly by the Communist forces of Kim Il Sung’s Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. Assisted in various ways and degrees by some 21 other nations, the United States committed itself and its forces and resources to the defense of the besieged South Korea and to the defeat of Communist aggression and expansionism represented by the North Korean attack and the subsequent Chinese intervention. Beginning from a standing start based on a state of unpreparedness that quickly emerged in the aftermath of World War II, American forces withstood torturous terrain, horrible extremes of weather, and a relentless Chinese enemy to hold the line indeed. And that holding of the line, unsatisfying as it was in the shadow of the Second World War, nonetheless represented a victory over the Soviet-based intent to expand Communist influence throughout the world—a strategic victory realized in full almost four decades later when the Berlin Wall tumbled down and the Soviet Union broke apart. Thus the term “forgotten victory.”

Myths serve many purposes, but reflection of complexity is not always one of them; and the Korean War was—and remains—a complex historical matter. The war’s difference, its uncertain place in the American cultural memory, finds expression not only in the body of fiction written about it, but in the titles or subtitles of other books as well. While one history of the Korean War is subtitled The Forgotten War, the titles of other works suggest a wider range of recollection: The Unknown War, War in Peacetime, The Limited War, The First War We Lost, The Wrong War, and—not least in significance—The War Before Vietnam.<sup>57</sup> While these labels indicate many of the things that the Korean War was, they also suggest rather strongly what it was not: World War II, Studs Terkel’s “Good War,” in 1950 the recently concluded general war that led to total victory through the unconditional surrender of vanquished aggressors. Korea was, instead, a limited war; and that made it a very different kind of war.

The frustration that surely must exist for those who fought the war and those who have written about it is its marginal status, often as less a truly “forgotten” entity than an afterthought. A good example of this syndrome occurs in Larry R. Johannessen’s Illumination Rounds: Teaching the Literature of the Vietnam War, as he suggests the design of academic courses or course-units that “combine the literature of the Vietnam War with literature from other wars.” One such course, he suggests, “might include

literature from World War I, World War II, and the Vietnam War (as well as the Korean War, if time permits" (emphasis added).<sup>58</sup> Thus Korea and its literature are relegated to a limbo-like existence between two other wars that, for entirely different reasons and in entirely different ways, captured on a grand scale the interest of the society and the imagination of many of its writers.

Part of the middle ground occupied by the Korean War has to do with the variously perceived nature of the enterprise, and its novels reflect that ambivalence. One can safely say that the essential justification of the "good war" that was World War II has never been a matter of widespread intellectual debate; similarly, the proposition that the war in Vietnam was most certainly not a "good" war will by now meet relatively little opposition even in the most conservative quarters. The fiction associated with these other wars supports those generalized points of view. And just as the problematic war in Korea is viewed ambivalently, perhaps more so now than ever, its fiction reflects that uncertainty.

Clearly, there are a number of "pro-war" texts: the novels by Michener, Slaughter, and Frank all contain explicit arguments that support the conflict as just and necessary. Similar messages appear in novels of lesser reputation that characterize the war as a necessary effort, though their thrust is sometimes weighted more toward memorializing what happened and those who experienced it than justifying the cause.<sup>59</sup> Opposition to the war appears as well, though not as much. Walt Sheldon's Troubling of a Star (1953) and Melvin Voorhees's Show Me a Hero (1954) are early novels that question the prosecution of the conflict more than the war itself, while Edward Franklin's It's Cold in Pongo-ni (1965) and Michael Lynch's An American Soldier (1969) are much more outspoken in depicting the futility of the enterprise. So are William Malliol's A Sense of Dark (1968) and George Sidney's For the Love of Dying (1969). Three of these later texts were published in the midst of the Vietnam War, suggesting the possible influence of that experience and the resultant cultural ambiance on these fictional depictions of the war in Korea. Their generally cynical tone and realistically frank language reflect the passage from a more innocent decade into a much more complicated period.<sup>60</sup>

For the most part, though, Korean War novels treat the war not as a matter of ideological or mythical import but rather as simple fact, a situation with which their fictional characters must deal. In some few cases the situation takes the form of the aviator's strangely bifurcated existence, ranging from the relative comfort of life at an air base or aboard a carrier to the grim possibility of death or imprisonment with every mission flown. In more instances the situation is the far different life of Marines on the line, whether conducting the deservedly legendary Chosin retreat or fighting the trench-based patrolling war of the latter two years. Most often, though, that situation concerns the Army, exploring some dimension of the soldier's story from a conflict that was fundamentally an infantry and artillery matter.

In the end, one can hardly take issue with the conventional wisdom that the body of Korean War fiction is generally undistinguished—hardly the stuff of which myths are made. Michener's The Bridges at Toko-ri and Styron's The Long March have received a certain amount of justified acclaim; and Frank's Hold Back the Night has joined these on the very short list of novels that appear throughout the similarly

brief collection of critical studies.<sup>61</sup> But even if the “Korean corpus” is lackluster as literature, it has an importance (as fiction often does) insofar as it conveys a sense of the time—in this case the time, and place, of the Korean War. From the work as a whole one can grasp an appreciation for the privations of the frontline experience, ranging from the bitterness of the winter cold to the boredom of the stalemated trench life to the frustration induced by a seeming lack of mission or focus and, throughout, the overwhelming awareness of home-front apathy: those things that made Korea different from what preceded it—and even that which followed. One could even suggest that makers of American foreign policy between our two Asian wars might have profited from reading a Korean War novel or two.

The absence of both a clearly articulated strategic end state and demonstrable popular support, the importance of which has only recently been firmly implanted in the consciousness of the American government, doubtless accounts to some degree for the relatively small quantity and generally unimpressive quality of Korean War fiction. A war, or “conflict,” or even “police action” that did not seize the interest, commitment and imagination of the country in the first place was also all too easy to forget—especially in the context of the booming decade that was only six months old when the unexpected war in Korea began. Any prospect for a significant retrospective approach to that war, not very likely to begin with, then all but disappeared when another “limited” Asian war placed its grasp upon the American society and its imaginers.

For those who experienced the Korean War and those who have written about it, however, their experience and the products of their creative imaginations remain important. Even more important is that those less personally familiar with this different, limited conflict attempt to understand it more fully through its reflection in a variety of forms, to include works of the creative imagination. It is likely that the literature of the “forgotten war” will always be overshadowed by more and better written monuments built to memorialize the wars that preceded and followed the vexing three-year conflict in Korea. Still, the content of that lesser-known literature is worth some attention for what it says about an American experience that may indeed sometimes be forgotten, and is largely unknown, but is nonetheless worth remembering—because it happened.

WORD COUNT = 8506



## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Ernest Hemingway, ed., Men at War: The Best War Stories of All Time (New York: Crown, 1942), 1.
- <sup>2</sup> Josiah Bunting III, "The Military Novel," Naval War College Review 26, no. 3 (1973): 30.
- <sup>3</sup> Norman Mailer, Cannibals and Christians (New York: Dial, 1966), 130; quoted in Paul Fussell, The Great War and Modern Memory (New York: Oxford UP, 1975), 320. Mailer's service was primarily with the Army's 112<sup>th</sup> Cavalry in the Philippines—as a rifleman. The fictional result of his experience was The Naked and the Dead (New York: Rinehart, 1948), still a major title within the World War II canon. Bunting, who served as an infantry officer and left the Army as a major to pursue a writing and academic career, is a Vietnam veteran whose experience was likewise the basis for a novel: The Lionheads (New York: Braziller, 1972).
- <sup>4</sup> Paul Fussell, "The Romantic War, and the Other One," in The Boy Scout Handbook and Other Observations (New York: Oxford UP, 1982), 208. Like Mailer a combat veteran of the Second World War, Fussell served as an infantry platoon leader with the Army's 410<sup>th</sup> Infantry in Europe. He has written of his wartime experience in Doing Battle: The Making of a Skeptic (Boston: Little, 1996).
- <sup>5</sup> Studs Terkel, "The Good War": An Oral History of World War Two (New York: Pantheon, 1984).
- <sup>6</sup> Arthur E. Brown, Jr., "The Strategy of Limited War," in Military Strategy: Theory and Application, ed. Arthur F. Lykke, Jr. (Carlisle Barracks, PA: United States Army War College, 1993), 214-15.
- <sup>7</sup> Russell F. Weigley, History of the United States Army (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 516.
- <sup>8</sup> According to Bernard Brodie, in a radio broadcast after Truman's firing of Douglas MacArthur, the President said: "In simplest terms, what we are doing in Korea is this: We are trying to prevent World War III." See War and Politics (New York: Macmillan, 1973), 100.
- <sup>9</sup> Allan R. Millett and Peter Maslowski, For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States of America, rev. and exp. ed. (New York: Free-Macmillan, 1994), 520.
- <sup>10</sup> Stephen E. Ambrose, "The Armed Services and American Strategy, 1945-1953," in Against All Enemies: Interpretations of American Military History from Colonial Times to the Present, ed. Kenneth J. Hagan and William R. Roberts (New York: Greenwood, 1986), 310.
- <sup>11</sup> Jeanine Basinger, The World War II Combat Film: Anatomy of a Genre (New York: Columbia UP, 1986), 179.
- <sup>12</sup> The best films concerning the Korean War include All the Young Men (Columbia, 1960); The Bridges at Toko-ri (Paramount, 1954); The Manchurian Candidate (United Artists, 1962); M\*A\*S\*H (Twentieth-Century Fox, 1970); Men in War (United Artists, 1957); Pork Chop Hill (United Artists, 1959); The Rack (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1956); The Steel Helmet (Lippert, 1951); Time Limit (United Artists, 1957); and War Hunt (United Artists, 1962).
- <sup>13</sup> Dean Acheson, Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department (New York: Norton, 1969), 474.

<sup>14</sup> In his history The Forgotten War: America in Korea 1950-1953 (New York: Times-Random, 1987), Clay Blair points out that in terms of both “infantry manpower” and “battlefield death toll” the Army-Marine Corps ratio was 86:14. Blair goes on to explain that “Army veterans of the Korean War would contend that the Marine Corps publicity was inversely proportional to the manpower committed and deaths sustained . . .” (xi).

<sup>15</sup> Arne Axelsson, Restrained Response: American Novels of the Cold War and Korea, 1945-1962 (New York: Greenwood, 1990), 166.

<sup>16</sup> Axelsson sees the work of the Korean War/Cold War authors as existing within “a well-established national realistic tradition . . .” (163). This is particularly true, he argues, in terms of “background, setting, and general environment” (165) on the part of authors who are, “by background and inclination, predisposed to giving justice to facts, paying attention to details, and valuing accuracy” (166). According to Axelsson, the military professionals who write fiction place great importance on verisimilitude and authenticity as a result of their “vocational training” that stresses discipline and accuracy. The military “amateurs”—reservists and draftees, for example—are influenced by “a personal stake” in the persuasive power of “hard facts, reality-oriented reporting, and documentary description”—even in fiction. Finally, the professional writers, influenced by mass-media development that “encourages pictorial and realistic approaches aimed at authenticity,” also tend to factual emphasis (167-68).

<sup>17</sup> Lasly appears on the novel’s rear cover in the uniform of an Air Force lieutenant colonel. A veteran of World War II as well as Korea, he clearly meant for his novel to commemorate the kind of units in which he served, bomber wings characterized by their obsolescent B-26 aircraft and their night-intruder mission. In his own words, quoted on the novel’s dust jacket: “Although the missions flown by these two wings comprised almost all the Allied air effort for half of each twenty-four-hour day, very limited recognition of this effort has been made until now. It is my sincere hope that this work will give the public a cockpit view of that special breed of cat which prowled the roads and railroads of nighttime North Korea.” Salter, born James A. Horowitz, graduated from the United States Military Academy in 1945 and served in Korea with the 4<sup>th</sup> Fighter-Interceptor Group in 1952, resigning from the Air Force in 1957; see Michael J. Krisman, ed., Register of Graduates and Former Cadets of the United States Military Academy (West Point, NY: Association of Graduates, 1980), 474. He has made a career as a writer of novels, short fiction, and screenplays, the latter category including the film Downhill Racer. His memoir Burning the Days: Recollection (New York: Random, 1997) includes a contribution to the body of nonfictional material on the Korean War. Other examples of fact-based fiction involving aerial combat include Kenneth L. Oden’s Yeah, Brave Coward (Rutland, VT: Tuttle, 1957), another Air Force novel, and Fred Skomra’s Behind the Bamboo Curtain: A Novel of the Air War over Korean Skies (New York: Greenwich, 1957). Oden is indicated on the title page as “Captain Kenneth L. Oden”; there his own disclaimer proclaims that “you might say that this book tells where Kilroy went in the Far East and what he did when he was there.” That indicates an intent to capture the essence of the experience—in this case, the Air Force pilot’s life—and render it into fiction. The same could be said of Skomra, a naval aviator, whose experience represents that of the World War II veteran and reservist called back to service in Korea. Service information on Skomra comes from a typical “about-the-author piece” from the rear of the book’s dust jacket. Biographical information about the various authors derives from that kind of source unless otherwise attributed.

<sup>18</sup> Duncan’s photographs were originally published in Life magazine, then in book form as This is War! A Photo-Narrative in Three Parts (New York: Harper, 1951). Crawford’s title is the closing phrase from a paragraph that describes the nearly frozen Marine’s slow-motion struggle with an equally frigid can of beans. It is also his answer when asked what wish he would want to have granted. There is a specific allusion to Duncan’s Life photo-essay in Charles Bracelen Flood’s novel More Lives Than One (Boston: Houghton, 1967), as protagonist Harry Purdick’s fiancée Anne looks at “the stubbled faces under the frost-covered helmets” of the Marines retreating from the Chosin Reservoir (70-71). In addition to his epigraph, Crawford paraphrases the title sentence with a comment by his character Lieutenant Martin, who says: “Up here I can’t see beyond tomorrow; that’s all I want right now. Just tomorrow” (122).

<sup>19</sup> This motto is printed at the bottom of the organization's letterhead stationery, which also describes the group as an "Exclusive Fraternity of Honor." The original quotation from Shakespeare's play is this: "We few, we happy few, we band of brothers . . ." (4.3.62). Of course, allusive citation of this Shakespearean passage is hardly unique; the Atkinson text cited in note 24 below also employs the lines as an epigraph. The quotation is ready-made for employment where the concept of fraternity is involved, especially with respect to a military organization or operation. Two other Korean War novels allude to Henry V in terms of the Shakespearean figure's famous eve-of-battle walk among the troops (act 4, scene 1). Both Lieutenant Holloway in Curt Anders's The Price of Courage (New York: Sagamore, 1957) and the title character in John Scanlan's Davis (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1969) are depicted in situations that clearly mimic the "little touch of Harry in the night" (4.Chor.48).

<sup>20</sup> Styron served in the Marines during both the Second World War and Korea, though not as a combatant in either. In a 1965 conversation, he referred somewhat ruefully to his military experience: "For some idiotic reason I stayed in the Reserves after World War II, and it was something which I came to regret because I was called up in 1951 at the very height of the Korean War." He went on to describe The Long March as "to a large degree autobiographical." See Conversations with William Styron, ed. James L. W. West III (Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 1985), 52.

<sup>21</sup> Walt Sheldon, Troubling of a Star (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1953). Just under the final sentence of Sheldon's text is an italicized notation that apparently reflects the time and place of the novel's completion: "3:57 p.m. November 7, 1951 / United Nations Base Camp / Munsan, Korea" (319).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 134-35.

<sup>23</sup> James A. Michener, The Bridges at Toko-ri (New York: Random, 1953; Fawcett Crest, 1982), 122-23.

<sup>24</sup> Thomas Fleming, The Officers' Wives (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981; New York: Warner, 1982), 155. Fleming had earlier written a history of West Point. A consideration of his novel, which concerns graduates of the Military Academy's class of 1950, leads to a realization of yet another way in which the Korean War is set apart from both World War II and Vietnam. Bill Yenne's Black '41: The West Point Class of 1941 and the American Triumph in World War II (New York: Wiley, 1991) tells the story of the class commissioned on the eve of the Second World War. Similarly, Rick Atkinson's The Long Gray Line (Boston: Houghton, 1989) concerns the graduating class of 1966, cadets who became lieutenants as American involvement in Vietnam deepened and—with thirty of its members killed in Southeast Asia—comprised the West Point class most depleted by that war. There is no similar book about the class of 1950, which sustained 34 battle deaths and 17 other fatalities during the Korean War (Krisman, 823). The same source provides a rather interesting statistic concerning Korean War battle deaths; the rate per 1000 for West Point graduates (all classes) was 14.6, compared to 9.8 for the Army at large and 5.8 for all services (821). There is, however, a published account of the experiences of the USMA class of 1949, whose members suffered 27 battle deaths and 11 other fatalities in a war that they hardly could have imagined at the time of their graduation. This book is Harry J. Maihafer's From the Hudson to the Yalu: West Point '49 in the Korean War (College Station: Texas A&M UP, 1993).

<sup>25</sup> Melvin Voorhees, Show Me a Hero (New York: Simon, 1954), 66.

<sup>26</sup> Ernest Frankel, Band of Brothers (New York: Macmillan, 1958), 290.

<sup>27</sup> Anders, 262.

<sup>28</sup> Stephen W. Meader, Sabre Pilot (New York: Harcourt, 1956), 133.

<sup>29</sup> James Salter, The Hunters (New York: Harper, 1956; Bantam, 1958), 28-29.

<sup>30</sup> Voorhees, 285, 286.

<sup>31</sup> James Hickey, Chrysanthemum in the Snow: The Novel of the Korean War (New York: Crown, 1990), 131.

<sup>32</sup> Scanlan, 330. The reference is to R. C. Sherriff's Journey's End: A Play in Three Acts (New York: Coward-McCann, 1929). This drama about the First World War ends with an artillery direct hit on the dugout in the British trenches that is the scene for the entire play.

<sup>33</sup> Edward Franklin, It's Cold in Pongo-ni (New York: Vanguard, 1965), 96. Franklin's other book related to the Korean War is the imaginative and well-written Man on the Wire (New York: Crown, 1978), a short novel that concerns a former Marine's return to the battleground (now DMZ) for a modern-day duel with a former Chinese enemy on the twentieth anniversary, in October 1972, of their first encounter. The first-person narrative, which intersperses present action with flashbacks to the war itself, is told by fictional writer Colin MacGregor, who has written his own novel of the Korean War called Reflections in Yellow. His ultimate victory seems as empty as the outcome of the war his strange reunion commemorates.

<sup>34</sup> Thomas Anderson, Your Own Beloved Sons (New York: Random, 1956), 65.

<sup>35</sup> Glen Ross, The Last Campaign (New York: Harper, 1962), 399.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 407.

<sup>37</sup> In his teaching guide Illumination Rounds: Teaching the Literature of the Vietnam War (Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1992), Larry R. Johannessen discusses the way in which some novels follow a bildungsroman pattern, and "the heart of these works is the 365-day tour of duty" (83). He then cites a number of Vietnam works that employ such a structure, ranging from Kent Anderson's Sympathy for the Devil (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1987) and Robert Olen Butler's The Alleys of Eden (New York: Horizon, 1981) to James Webb's Fields of Fire (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1978) and Stephen Wright's Meditations in Green (New York: Scribner's, 1983) (85). The rotation system employed in Korea beginning in 1951 was different, based on a point system that established a criterion of 36 points and gave credit to troops in proportion to their proximity to the front: four points per month for frontline personnel, three for others within "the designated combat zone," and two for those elsewhere within Korea. This system is explained (in comparison with the Vietnam system) by Bruce Palmer, Jr. in The 25-Year War: America's Military Role in Vietnam (Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 1984; New York: Touchstone, 1985), 204.

<sup>38</sup> W. E. B. Griffin, The Captains, Brotherhood of War Book II (New York: Jove, 1983), 33.

<sup>39</sup> Michener, 34-35.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 17-18.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 36. Tarrant's assessment echoes Omar Bradley's well-known characterization of the wider conflict between the United States and China desired by Douglas MacArthur: "the wrong war, in the wrong place, at the wrong time, with the wrong enemy"—cited, among other sources, by Geoffrey Perret

in A Country Made by War: From the Revolution to Vietnam—the Story of America's Rise to Power (New York: Random, 1989; Vintage-Random, 1990), 464. Another version, rather overwritten, appears in Dick Sayers's No Victory, No Sting (Pittsboro, NC: Town House, 1992), wherein the narrator believes himself to be "in the wrong army, the wrong country, the wrong war, the wrong patrol, the wrong mission (whatever it was), and with the wrong ultimate goal (and nobody could tell me what it really was)" (34).

<sup>43</sup> Michener, 57.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 126.

<sup>45</sup> William Styron, The Long March (New York: Random, 1952), 54-55.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 111.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 113.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 117-18.

<sup>52</sup> Samuel Hynes, A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture (1990; New York, Atheneum, 1991), xi.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 280.

<sup>54</sup> "Remarks by the President at Korean War Veterans Memorial Ground-Breaking Ceremony," The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 14 June 1992: 1.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Sources of the titles or subtitles just cited: Clay Blair, The Forgotten War: America in Korea 1950-1953 (1988); Jon Halliday and Bruce Cumings, Korea: The Unknown War (1988); J. Lawton Collins, War in Peacetime: The History and Lessons of Korea (1969); David Rees, Korea: The Limited War (1964); Bevin Alexander, Korea: The First War We Lost (1986); Rosemary Foot, The Wrong War: American Policy and the Dimensions of the Korean Conflict, 1950-1953 (1985); and Callum A. MacDonald, Korea: The War Before Vietnam (1986). See the bibliography for full facts of publication.

<sup>58</sup> Johannessen, 9.

<sup>59</sup> Other novels that argue for the worth of the war are those by Bergee, Cole, and Meader. Works that serve a positively memorializing function include those by Hickey and Sayers mentioned above; see also Con Sellers, Brothers in Battle (New York: Pocket, 1989).

<sup>60</sup> Other negative views emerge from Stephen Becker's Dog Tags (New York: Random, 1973) and Richard Hooker's M\*A\*S\*H (New York: Morrow, 1968). Published during the Vietnam years, both novels concern doctors drafted into military service and are more anti-war in general than anti-Korean War. A particularly negative polemic is James Drought's The Secret (Norwalk, CT: Skylight, 1963). Its narrator describes Korea this way: "The Korean War was a blinding nightmare of muck, blood, strange and slant-eyed faces both in front of us trying to kill us and behind us begging from us, offering us women and wine for money" (140).

<sup>61</sup> Korean War novels that deserve greater recognition for their quality include those by Franklin and Sidney cited earlier and, offering the rare humorous perspective, Gene L. Coon's Meanwhile, Back at the Front (New York: Crown, 1961). The latter pokes fun at the Marine Corps while characterizing it as an admirably idiosyncratic organization informed by a significant tradition both distinguished and perpetuated by careful propagation of the service's distinct image.

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